



THE KING OF THE JEWS
UNIT 27 • SESSION 1

THE ACCUSED KING

MAIN POINT

Jesus was arrested, tried, and condemned to die even though He did no wrong.

LUKE 22:66-71 • JESUS WAS WRONGLY TRIED

66 When daylight came, the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the scribes, convened and brought him before their Sanhedrin. **67** They said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I do tell you, you will not believe. **68** And if I ask you, you will not answer. **69** But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” **70** They all asked, “Are you, then, the Son of God?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” **71** “Why do we need any more testimony,” they said, “since we’ve heard it ourselves from his mouth?”

LUKE 23:1-5 • JESUS WAS WRONGLY ACCUSED

1 Then their whole assembly rose up and brought him before Pilate. **2** They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.” **3** So Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” **4** Pilate then told the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no grounds for charging this man.” **5** But they kept insisting, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he started even to here.”

LUKE 23:13-16,18-25 • JESUS WAS WRONGLY CONDEMNED

13 Pilate called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, **14** and said to them, “You have brought me this man as one who misleads the people. But in fact, after examining him in your presence, I have found no grounds to charge this man with those things you accuse him of. **15** Neither has Herod, because he sent him back to us. Clearly, he has done nothing to deserve death. **16** Therefore, I will have him whipped and then release him.” **18** Then they all cried out together, “Take this man away! Release Barabbas to us!” **19** (He had been thrown into prison for a rebellion that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) **20** Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate addressed them again, **21** but they kept shouting, “Crucify! Crucify him!” **22** A third time he said to them, “Why? What has this man done wrong? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore, I will have him whipped and then release him.” **23** But they kept up the pressure, demanding with loud voices that he be crucified, and their voices won out. **24** So Pilate decided to grant their demand **25** and released the one they were asking for, who had been thrown into prison for rebellion and murder. But he handed Jesus over to their will.

INTRO OPTION 1

STICKY SITUATION

SUPPLIES LIST

WRITING UTENSILS, STICKY NOTES

Place students in groups. Give each group two sticky notes. On one sticky note, they should write out a situation where someone their age might be falsely accused. For example, “Your classmate cheated off of you in class, but the teacher assumes you did it.” On the other sticky note, they should write out a possible response.

Explain that false accusations can put us in some sticky situations; it’s never fun or easy to be accused of something you didn’t do. Jesus understands exactly how that feels. He was falsely accused of speaking against God and Caesar and of lying to mislead people. Jesus was the most innocent person to ever live, but His innocent death was part of God’s plan.

INTRO OPTION 2

WAKE UP CHARADES

SUPPLIES LIST

PREPARED PROMPT CARDS

Before you meet, write out scenarios students can act out on index cards.

Invite students to form a single file line. Give a prompt card to the first person in the line. Tell the other students to close their eyes. The student with the card “wakes up” only the next student in line and acts out the prompt. Once the second student has an answer, he or she “wakes up” the next student in line and does the same. They continue this pattern to the end of the line without using any words.

Invite the student at the end of the line to share his or her answer, then give the answer on the card. Next, go down the line and ask students what they thought the answer was. Explain that sometimes in life, what we do or say gets twisted. Jesus knows what this is like and teaches us how to respond in honesty and humility.



SCRIPTURE READING

MAIN POINT

**Jesus was arrested, tried, and
condemned to die even though
He did no wrong.**

1. JESUS WAS WRONGLY TRIED

READ LUKE 22:66-71

The Sanhedrin broke several rules in trying Jesus (see commentary). The religious leaders watched Jesus for a while before His arrest and believed He was guilty of blasphemy. Their goal in questioning Him was for Jesus to announce He was the Messiah. Although it was illegal to convict criminals based on their own testimony, the Sanhedrin did just that. God is sovereign—He was in control even over Jesus’s unfair trial—because He planned for Jesus’s death to defeat sin and death.

HOW CONCERNED IS OUR CULTURE WITH FAIRNESS? HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN SOMETHING IS UNFAIR?

We like things to be fair. We have a judicial system and referees in sports to ensure fairness. But even with these things, life can still be very unfair. Sometimes we don’t get justice. Jesus’s trial was unfair, but He reacted in obedience to the Father. Jesus knew the Father’s will, and He viewed the injustice through a lens of obedience to God’s plan—which involved His death—rather than fighting back.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS’ OPINIONS KEPT THEM FROM SEEING THE TRUTH. HOW DO YOUR OPINIONS OR DESIRES SOMETIMES GET IN THE WAY OF YOU SEEING GOD’S TRUTH?

The religious leaders held tightly to their opinions even though Jesus had clearly displayed His authority as the Son of God. They couldn’t see the truth. We sometimes allow our plans to cloud our spiritual eyesight too. We cling so tightly to what we expect or what we want that we can’t hear God’s voice. We must be willing to listen for God’s direction, especially when it’s different from our own plans.

2. JESUS WAS WRONGLY ACCUSED

READ LUKE 23:1-5

The religious leaders took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor of the region. Their accusations were false: Jesus was leading the Jewish nation to truth; He encouraged paying taxes to the appropriate person (see Mark 12:17); and He cared nothing for stealing political power from Caesar. The Jews knew these accusations would interest Pilate because they not only affected the Jews but also the Romans.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN WRONGLY ACCUSED? HOW DID YOU REACT?



LUKE 22:66-71

22:66-71. “Jewish death-sentence trials were supposed to last two days, not the one day given Jesus. The trial came during the Passover festival, when no trials were allowed. Jesus’s accusers allowed contradictory evidence but listened only to the part that agreed with their predetermined verdict. Jewish practice let the least experienced members of the council cast votes first, with the high priest casting the final vote. In Jesus’s trial the high priest immediately pronounced a guilty verdict. Nothing can cover the fact that justice was not served, that the justice system became pure mockery.”¹

22:70-71. “The morning meeting was an attempt to legitimize what they already had decided to do. . . . The leaders took Jesus’s answer to their question as an affirmation and a claim to be the Christ, the Son of God. ‘We have heard it from his own lips.’ As far as Jesus’s opponents were concerned, their purpose had now been achieved. It did not matter to them that Jesus was convicted on the basis of His own testimony, a patently illegal procedure.”²



BIG QUESTION

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO INJUSTICE?

Jesus responded to His own unjust trial and condemnation with silence, fulfilling prophecy (see Isa. 53:7). He didn’t fight back because He understood God’s will for Him. But there were times when Jesus did stand up against injustice. For example, when the religious leaders were on the verge of stoning a woman caught in adultery, Jesus stepped in to point out their hypocrisy, saving her life (see John 8:1-11). He also asked us to feed the hungry and care for widows and orphans. Jesus modeled standing up for those who were helpless, and He calls us to as well. We are surrounded by injustice and oppression, and Jesus calls us to respond in truth and love.



SCRIPTURE READING

MAIN POINT

**Jesus was arrested, tried, and
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When we're wrongly accused, most of us immediately try to defend ourselves by explaining our innocence and justifying ourselves. We want to point the finger at who is really to blame. Jesus didn't react this way at all. Jesus's actions fulfilled prophecy concerning His silent suffering (see Isa. 53:7).

WHY WERE THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS SO BOTHERED BY JESUS? WHAT WAS JESUS DOING THAT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS DIDN'T LIKE?

The religious leaders falsely accused Jesus, but they did get one thing correct: Jesus was stirring things up! He preached a radical gospel of grace and love for all people, which was very different from the Jews' obsession with following the law. They knew Jesus's message would reach people, and they were willing to take extreme measures to stop it from spreading.

3. JESUS WAS WRONGLY CONDEMNED

READ LUKE 23:13-25

This moment in Jesus's trial is difficult to read. Jesus experienced betrayal as the crowd turned into a mob, screaming for Pilate to release Barabbas, a criminal convicted of revolt and murder. Ironically, Jesus would take his place, but He would take ours as well. Jesus shouldered the condemnation we deserved because of our sin, making a way for us to spend eternity with God.

HOW DOES JESUS TEACH US TO ENDURE AND OBEY IN THIS PASSAGE?

The ability to endure—to keep going— isn't automatic. It's something we must exercise. Obedience is also a discipline we must continually develop. Jesus spent His life preparing for this moment. Because He was One with the Father, He trusted His plan for saving humanity. He endured the cross because of the joy to come (see Heb. 12:2), and He obeyed the Father because He daily practiced obedience.

HOW DOES JESUS TAKING BARABBAS'S PLACE FORESHADOW WHAT HE WOULD DO ON THE CROSS?

We question the crowd's sanity when they chose to release a murderer. But we must remember God is sovereign—everything that happens only happens because God wills or allows it. Barabbas's release had a purpose: it foreshadowed what Jesus would do on the cross. He would willingly take the place of the vilest sinner. In our minds, we think Barabbas is unworthy of this mercy, but God offers the same mercy to all of us because of the death of His Son.



LUKE 23:1-5

23:1-2. “The Sanhedrin aroused mass hysteria, leading Jesus from their meeting place to Pilate’s court. Jewish religious leaders needed to rid their world of one who threatened their leadership, their popularity with the people, and their religious system. But religious charges would not do in Pilate’s court. They had to have political charges. Jesus, the self-proclaimed enemy of ambitious, self-serving religion, had to be portrayed as the enemy of Roman rule in Palestine. Thus, the Jewish leaders painted him as a subversive, one leading the Jewish nation away from Rome.”³

23:2. “This charge concerning the poll tax is patently false, as 20:25 has already shown. But the charge is clever, because Pilate’s major political responsibility is the collection of taxes for Rome. A second element in the charge is also a source of concern. The taxes go to Caesar, raising the issue of Pilate’s personal loyalty or disloyalty. Failure to act against one who opposes Caesar would mean one is not a friend of Caesar either.”⁴

LUKE 23:13-25

23:24-25. “Jesus’s prediction recorded in Luke 22:37 comes to pass. Jesus is reckoned among the criminals, even though he is innocent. He is suffering as a servant. Though the suffering is unjust and intense, exaltation will follow (Isa. 52:13–15). He also has been ‘handed over’ to the Gentiles (Luke 18:32), only to be handed back to the Jews.”⁵

23:25. “Jewish religious ambition had joined Pilate’s Roman political ambition to sentence the innocent Jesus to death.”⁶

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ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE

ENSLAVED TO SIN

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines us toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (see Rom. 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God’s commandments whenever possible. It isn’t until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin’s enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 8:2).



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus was condemned to die although He did no wrong. In this, Jesus became the perfect substitute for us, bearing our sins on the cross to provide forgiveness. All who have trusted in Christ are no longer under condemnation but have been declared righteous by God.



HEAD



HEART



HANDS

HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S LOVE TO KNOW HE ALLOWED JESUS TO BE FALSELY ACCUSED AND CONDEMNED FOR US?

From our limited human perspective, we can't fully understand the depth of God's love for us. Compelled by His love, God willingly stepped into human flesh—through Jesus—and carried our sin and shame. God loves us so much He was willing to take our place (see John 3:16). No other love on earth could come close to God's love. And it is only because of God's great love for us that we can have eternal life with Him.

THE CROWD THAT HAD PRAISED JESUS BEFORE CALLED FOR HIS DEATH (SEE MATT. 21:8-11). WHEN HAVE YOU ALLOWED OTHERS' OPINIONS TO DETERMINE YOUR OPINIONS AND ACTIONS?

It's difficult to not get swept up in the opinions of our friends and the people around us. It's why our culture experiences fads in music, fashion, and sports. But it's dangerous to allow the "crowd's" opinion to affect your thinking about Jesus. Our standards and convictions must be based on God's Word, and our knowledge of Christ must be founded in Scripture instead of people's opinions. We must take anything we hear and place it next to God's Word to determine its truth.

JESUS SUFFERED IN OUR PLACE. HOW CAN YOU IMITATE JESUS IF YOU ARE CALLED TO SUFFER FOR SOMEONE ELSE?

We tend to do whatever we can to avoid suffering. While we may not have to physically suffer for someone else, we may suffer for them in other ways. This could look like allowing someone else to succeed in your place. Or it may be that your reputation suffers because you befriend someone others mistreat. It's hard for us to accept suffering, but it can have a purpose. We have to remember that God is sovereign over everything—even our suffering.